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A
SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
SERMON

Preached at

LINCOLN'S - INN,

On JANUARY 30. 1732.

By a LAYMAN.

Addressed to a very Important and most
Solemn CHURCHMAN, Sollicitor-General
for Causes Ecclesiastical.

L O N D O N:

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SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

MEMOIRS

OF

THE

LORDS OF THE TREASURY

IN GREAT BRITAIN

AND IRELAND

FROM 1783 TO 1801

BY

J. G. W. L.

ESQ.



A
SUPPLEMENT
TO THE

SERMON preached at *Lincoln's-Inn*,

On *January 30. 1732.*

HOLY FATHER,

I APPLY to you without Form or Compliment, about certain Doubts and Difficulties, which, I am told, no man is so fit as you to answer and resolve. Your great Abilities (I do not say in Divinity; for that is a very different thing, but) in Canons, Distinctions, Discipline, and all Parts of Church-Attorneyship, are allowed by all Men: Even such as dispute His Majesty's Title to the Crown, allow you that of an *Excellent Churchman*. As I aim at no Preferment, and therefore bring no Incense, I was willing to shew you, that it was possible to dedicate to you without Worship

or Daubing. Besides, I take this my Address to you to be exceeding suitable; since you, who have made Church-Power and Church-Revenues so much your Care and Pursuit, are a proper Judge, whether what I have said of the evil Influence of Church-Power and Revenue over Religion and human Society be true.

You, who must have traced ecclesiastical Grandeur up to its first Sources, and marked its Progress, Improvements and Variations, can readily explain how it arose, how it was used, whether righteously acquired, whether honestly employed, how it affected the Laity, how the Clergy; what Tendency it had to advance Religion and civil Happiness, what Success in mending the Morals, and increasing the Humility and pious Labours of Churchmen.

You, who are known to contend for ecclesiastical Authority, can demonstrate what that Authority is, whence derived, by whom and over whom to be exercised, how to be reconciled to Conscience, Christianity, and common Sense; whether it can produce or preserve Conviction, and make Men Christians, or continue them so; and whether such Authority be consistent with Reason and Grace, or whether Reason and Grace do not exclude and destroy such Authority; as also how such Authority consists with the Oaths of the Clergy, who swear to renounce all
Claim

Claim to any Power of any kind or sort whatsoever, but what they derive from the Crown.

Pray tell us, what any Clergyman can do, which any Layman, who can read and write, cannot do, and may not do, if the Law appoint him? Is it not the Law alone, which has the Power to qualify, and can alone disqualify? Whoever maintains the contrary, incurs a *Præmunire*. Have the Clergy any Revelation but the Bible? And is not such Revelation made to the Laity, and indeed, without Restriction, to all Men? And are not the necessary and practical Parts of the Bible very plain and intelligible to Lay-men? And have Clergymen ever agreed about explaining the dark Parts? I wish none had ever endeavoured to darken the clearest Parts of it, or to hide and suppress the Whole. If the Assertion of any Powers invisible in Men, that is, Powers which have no visible Effect, be other than a Dream and Forgery; you will do well to shew what they are, whence they are, and how they effect their strange and invisible Feats. To read Prayers, and Scriptures, and Sermons; to give Bread and Wine, and say words over them; to sprinkle Water upon Babes; to declare what offends God and his Law; and to wear Gowns and Bands, and broad Hats, are Exploits which may be performed by very mean Men amongst the Laity: And to judge and declare who are qualified to perform them, is a Task as easy

as

as the rest. Will you say, that such Functions are less effectual in a Layman, or more so in a Clergyman? Who told you so? It may be so said in the old popish Canons or Schoolmen, and in the extravagant Writings of some Ecclesiasticks; but no where in the New Testament.

Will you say, that God blesses any pious Office done by a Layman, less than when done by a Clergyman? And what Idea would this give us of God? Will you say that a little Infant, free from Offence, and incapable of offending, is therefore debarred from Heaven, or any part of Bliss, because he dies unbaptized, or was baptized by a Layman? And what Idea does such a Tenet exhibit of the divine Being? Or, if a Layman can do this sacred Office effectually, Why not more Offices, and all?

You know what impious Notions many Clergymen have broached and held about Baptism, as if no Salvation could be had without it, and no Baptism without them. This is one of the monstrous, I had almost said blasphemous, Whims resulting from the other monstrous Whim, that of an indelible Character; which is a Whim so very strange and inconceivable, that where 'tis once believed and established, 'tis no wonder to see the wildest Extravagancies, and even Impossibilities and Contradictions maintained and believed in consequence of it: Since from any
senseless

senseless Position whatsoever, endless Deductions of Nonsense can be drawn, and may seem naturally to follow; and one Contradiction shall produce, and illustrate, and prove an hundred Contradictions. Thus, if either the indelible Character, or apostolic Succession, or Infallibility, or Power of binding and loosing be but allowed; from these, or any of these, all the most fraudulent, fanatical, and engrossing Claims of the Pope and Popish Clergy, may be deduced and established.

May not a Layman perform all spiritual Offices, where there are no Clergymen? Is a Chapter of the Bible less edifying when read by a Layman, than when read by a Clergyman? I ask this the rather, because I knew a Tradesman, who read Prayers and the Scripture on Sundays at a foreign Fishery, where there were no Clergy, and he was therefore thought proper to be put into Deacon's Orders, as if he had been thence the better qualified for reading Prayers and the Bible. Was this Employment in him either more sacred or more effectual afterwards than before? If it was, What an Idea does this too give us of the Great God? Or have the Clergy succeeded better than Laymen, in appointing one another? Father *Paul* says, and History says, the contrary. That excellent Writer lays it down as Fact, That the best Bishops were made by Princes; and that whenever the
Clergy

Clergy had the conducting of their own Elections, infinite Disorders ensued. So little, or so ill Effect had their indelible Character in making and appointing one another. Was not this Pretence to an indelible Character, one great Source of Popery and the Inquisition, and of all the Terrors, Frauds, and Deformities of Priestcraft? And was it not natural for *Indelibility* to produce *Infallibility*; and is there more to be said for the former than for the latter?

I should also be glad to hear you discourse rationally about Pluralities and Commendams, and shew their Consistency with the Duty and Call of such Churchmen as possess them. As they who do not reside, do not labour; Should such as do no Work, receive Pay? *Beneficium propter officium*, was the Stile of old; and Benefices were given for spiritual Purposes. Indeed the temporal Part was only considered in a second and circumstantial Sense. “ Afterwards, says Father *Paul*, “ the spiritual Part was forgot, and nothing “ but the Profits regarded.” This was lamentable Corruption; yet such as dealt in it, and, in truth, in little else, called themselves holy Men; that is, the most sordid, the most corrupt and covetous, such as made Traffic of Churches and Souls, assumed to be holy, and claimed an indelible Character.

In the primitive Times, it was scandalous and forbidden, that any Clerk should quit
his

his Cure, though ever so poor, for another though richer. It was alledged and ordained, That if any Bishop despised his Bishoprick for being small, and sought after a greater Diocese and larger Rents, he should not only never obtain the greater Bishoprick, which through Avarice he desired, but even lose that which he already possessed, and through Pride despised. What can be a more sacred Trust than a Trust of Souls; what so important? Does it not require all the Time and Attention that mortal Men can bestow? And how is such Duty to be reconciled to Pluralities and Commendams, how to Non-residence? The holding of more Churches than one, was adjudged by some principal Fathers of the primitive Church, to be spiritual Polygamy: And I question whether a Plurality of Wives, though Felony by our Law, be so sinful, or can have such bad Consequences, when we consider that some Pastors who are greatly endowed, hardly ever see the Faces of their Flocks: Some have several Flocks, and feed none of them, but take vast Pay for nothing, and employ Underlings for poor Wages. If these Underlings and these poor Wages are sufficient, as by their Practice these great Clergymen shew that they think, Is it not natural for the Laity to desire to make as good Bargains as the Clergy? Is it not natural to conclude, that since the highest and most solemn Offices

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may

may be performed at a small Expence, as is manifest from the hiring of Curates, it would be but Prudence to save such high Revenues given to such as do nothing but hire others?

How a spiritual Trust once conferred, could be afterwards delegated to another, the Trust itself transferred, and the Advantages reserved, I could never yet account either from the Gospel of Christ, or from the natural Ideas of Morality. Yet are not great Revenues daily desired upon the Erection of any new Church, though he who is to enjoy them, often does no Duty at all, but leaves it to a cheap Hireling? And is not that Service for which the Parish is to pay many Hundreds a year, often performed for thirty or forty Pounds a year? Some civil Trusts may be thus executed by Deputies; but is this a way to deal (I had almost said to traffic) with Souls, and to be answerable for them? Is this spiritual Fathership? Is this apostolic, or are those who do so still Successors to the Apostles? I should be glad to hear you explain this, and shew whether any Man who professed to turn Religion into a Trade, could act in a different or more lucrative manner.

I have likewise some Doubts to propose to you about Excommunication, which, I fear, is little understood, and greatly abused. If it were originally no more than turning a Man out of a Society with the Laws of which he would

would not comply, as was really the Case, and as is daily done in common Clubs, and in Juntoes of Traders; is it not notorious Abuse, as well as extremely daring and wicked, to construe it into the dismal Delivery of a Soul to the Devil and Damnation? Will you say, dare you venture to say, that a Person excommunicated is in the Power of Satan, and that such a Sentence sends him thither? If it do, they who pronounce it must be the most wicked and impious of all Men; nor can any earthly Consideration excuse them. Is it for Tithe? Then is their Tithe dearer to them than an immortal Soul. Is it not for Tithe, but for Contumacy, in not appearing and owning their Jurisdiction? Then is their Pride and Jurisdiction of more Weight with them than the Salvation of Men? But if Excommunication have no such Effect, why is not the Bugbear removed, by explaining it into a reasonable and a christian Meaning? Or rather, why is a Practice which cannot be of God, suffered to continue, why impiously continued in his Name? And can any Man who defends Excommunication, argue against Purgatory? The temporal Effects of it are sufficiently heavy and hard; so hard, that nothing under the highest Consideration can justify the Man who brings them down upon another. Its spiritual Operation, were it true, would indeed be shocking and frightful. But who would affront the Divine Be-

ing, by believing that he, the Author of Mercy and Wisdom, could contradict his own Nature to gratify the Peevishness and Cruelty of weak and revengeful Men?

They who are apt to bring the Charge of Blasphemy against others, often upon very small, sometimes upon very ludicrous Occasions, would do well to consider, Whether there can be higher Blasphemy, than to assert a Power in Man of directing or obliging the Almighty; a Privilege to apply the Might and Terrors of Omnipotence to the Perdition of Men? I presume you will not say of Excommunication, what I am told the reverend Dr. Fiddes says of Popish Indulgences in his History of *Henry VIII. That they were a Treasure which the Church had been long in possession of.*

I leave it therefore to your Judgment, whether this spiritual Engine be for the Service of Christ's Church, or for the Credit of such as call themselves his Ministers; and whether what is shocking to Sense and Humanity, can ever be true in Religion, or a Part of Religion, I mean of the Christian Religion.

I would also humbly propose it to your serious Thoughts, whether amongst your publick Admonitions and Reproofs to the Laity, you might not think it advisable, and find cause, to let your Brethren the Clergy have their Share. Are there no prevailing
Mistakes

Mistakes or Disorders amongst them? No strange and unreasonable Claims maintained by them who are called Orthodox, no extravagant Writings published, no wild and passionate Sermons preached? Is Orthodoxy alone never preferred by you to eminent Piety and Sufficiency, under suspicion of Heterodoxy? Is the Man who asserts *Christ's Kingdom not to be of this World*, as dear to you as they who would found worldly Power upon the Gospel of Christ, and erect a Priesthood with Power, in virtue of being Successors to him, who had no Power, and disclaimed all Power? Are you equally tender to the Failings of Laymen, as to those of Clergymen? Or is it your Opinion and Policy, that the same should be concealed and dissembled, at least not exposed to the profane Laity?

I remember an Instance, where I thought the Partiality of a more than Reverend Clergyman too apparent: For whilst *He* manifested much just Zeal for capitally punishing certain beastly Offenders against the Law, and Purity and Design of Nature, I mean *Lay-Offenders*; all *His* Zeal cooled, at least produced small Effect, in the Case of a *Brother Doctor* found to have been flagrantly guilty of that Abomination for many Years, and often in a very sacred Place: Yet this Doctor escaped with an Admonition and a small Fine, in a Court too where that more than Reverend Clergyman was thought to have no

small Influence. And I suppose, that that unnatural Sinner was still esteem'd to be a *true Minister of the Church*, since he is still left to act as such, and to receive the Stipend of such, doubtless to the great Edification of Souls, and Credit of Orthodoxy and of Episcopal Courts. So far was that more than Reverend Clergyman from applying, on this Occasion, to the secular Arm, though *He* had just before praised it for finding out, and pouring down its deadly Terrors upon, such bestial Criminals.

A little of your publick and private Advice to your Brethren, recommending to them more Meekness and Moderation, with a Behaviour more complaisant and less litigious towards their People, would be of use. I hear that you give them very different Advice, even to be as troublesome and vexatious to their People as they can, by departing from settled Customs, and starting new Demands. Such Advice is by no means proper for them, nor do they want it. It is certain, they would do well not to render themselves daily more unpopular and obnoxious by Haughtiness, Greediness, and Law-Suits. My Lord *Clarendon* owns, that the Clergy of that Time, supported and animated by Archbishop *Laud*, grew assuming, and lived not well with their Neighbours in the Country. This bred ill Blood towards them; and when they were pulled down, it was remembered how insolently

lently they had behaved when they were uppermost: Hence the easier way was made for the sower and gloomy Set who succeeded them.

The present daily Increase of their Property, their Monopoly of Advowsons, their breaking all the Modus's, their frequent Success in troublesome Suits, and their apparent Fondness of such, help to sooth and exalt them: But as all this is seen, and felt, and regretted by the whole Body of the Laity, it may bring a Storm strong enough to overthrow all these Advantages. Perhaps too Abuses, not now thought of, will be then sought, and found, and severely redressed.

This Thought is really painful to me; in the Sincerity of my Heart I speak it: For I dread all great Changes, and all Approaches towards such. I would therefore have the Clergy provoke none. They must not, in an enlightened Age, and an Age of Liberty, think themselves a Match for the Laity, were the Laity once tempted to exert themselves. Perhaps they were never less a Match for the Laity than now. Times and Countries have been, when the People were so blind, or so awed, that though Religion was turned publicly into Power and Gain, they could not perceive it, or durst not censure it. Such Times are no longer, nor is *England* that Country now.

Modesty

Modesty and Meekness, in the Language and Writings of the Clergy, is likewise always commendable, and no more than good Policy. The fierce and provoking Stile is not the Christian, nor the gaining Stile; and Pride and Passion are ill Proofs of Religion. But most unpardonable is the Practice of such, who, when a Man differs from them in any ecclesiastical Point, though utterly foreign from Religion, yet charge him confidently with Infidelity, let his Stile be ever so Christian, and his Professions for Christianity ever so strong. This Practice, follow it who will, is unchristian and malicious, but shamefully common. I therefore like Dr. *Conybear's* late Book for its Temper and Civility; nor, as far as I have looked into it, could I find any Strokes of Pertness or Anger; two Ingredients very common in the Works of Ecclesiasticks. Another Doctor, of some Name in Controversy, and an Advocate and an Answerer on the same Side, hath shewn such wild Transports, such Virulence and Scurriosity, that it is not to be determined, whether the Madman, the Scold, or the Executioner, predominate most in his Composition.

I have heard that even you, holy Father, with all your Affectation of Smoothness and Temper, have treated Gentlemen with very coarse Names, for no other Reason, than that they differed from you about Matters of Power and Speculation. This was not wise:

(That

(That it was ill-bred, I do not wonder), and it might tempt, and perhaps warrant Gentlemen so used to treat you very roughly. A *Monster* is by no means a proper Name for Gentlemen, some of them as well esteemed and as generally beloved as you are. I could paint such Usage in Colours which you would not like. I could likewise draw such a Character of some who are dead (for upon the Dead and Living, *Monster* and *Infidel* are Names which, it seems, you freely throw): I say, I could represent some of them in such Lights, such true Lights, as would equal, and, I doubt, much foil the best that you can be shewn in. I could represent their amiable and benevolent Minds, their great Knowledge, their elevated Capacity, their universal Integrity and Love of Mankind, their Scorn of Hypocrisy and little Party-Views, of narrow Spirits, and of every mean and selfish Artifice.

But I want Room and Time to enter fully into the pleasing and mournful Theme. Neither do I think myself qualified to make equal Returns to coarse Usage. Let me just say, that the Words *Infidel* and *Infidelity*, as they are grown Terms of Anger and Reproach, can seldom become the Mouth or Pen of a candid or well-bred Man. Pardon me, when I assert, that every Man living has as good a right to differ in Opinion from you, as you have to differ from him: If you think

or maintain the contrary, you have a *monstrous* Share of Pride or Folly; nor do I know a greater *Monster* amongst Men, than the solemn Hypocrite, who pretends to derive Pomp, and Power, and worldly Wealth out of the New Testament; who would confine the uncontrollable Freedom of the Soul by human Articles and Restrictions, and treats such as follow Reason and not him, with Spite and saucy Language.----But I check myself; nor will I finish my Picture of this sort of *Monster*, lest the Likeness might be too glaring. I therefore return to advise you; and here let me assure you, that it is repugnant to all Candor, and unworthy your Character, to descend to mean Solicitations, and to teaze for Prosecutions against such Writings and Authors as thwart you. In Matters of Religion, no Book which can be answered, ought to be prosecuted; nor can you find any Honour in such Prosecution, no more than you can shew Charity in procuring it. A Minister of Truth begging the Aid of worldly Penalties in a Dispute about Spirituals, makes a poor, a strange, and a scandalous Figure. Such Conduct seems only to suit with worldly Designs, and to bewray, if not the Weakness of his Cause, at least his Insufficiency to defend it.

To oppose Force to just Reasoning, is unjust; to answer false Reasoning by Force, is foolish and needless. A bad Cause is quickly
 refused,

refuted, a good Cause easily defended; and Christianity, though it can bear much Severity and Violence, can never exercise nor warrant any: nor was the Christian Name ever more abused, than when prostituted to justify Rigor and Violence: And Punishment for Opinion might indeed be of *ecclesiastical*, but could never be of *christian* Pedigree.

You have, Holy Father, the Reputation of a strong Churchman; and Charity obliges me to believe you a Christian; (for the Christian Spirit is not suspicious no more than revengeful) Be the Churchman still; but let the Christian predominate, and then I dare say you will never solicit another Prosecution. The Clergy, to a Man, believe your Heart bent upon Church Power, and upon all the Means that lead to it. You have also thoroughly convinced the Laity in this Point, though 'tis said that you had rather they were not so convinced, and are wont to speak to them in a Stile not at all favouring of a Passion for sacerdotal Rule: Which Behaviour in you is only artful, and must not be called *false* or *insincere*, since Insincerity is not a christian Virtue. But such Art, when found out, loses its Use: You would therefore do well to drop such of your grand Views as bode not well towards the Laity; for they are upon their Guard, and I would not have you put them upon trying their Strength and Mettle.

Rather take a contrary and securer Method; surrender your weak Passes, give up indefensible Points, claim nothing but what the Constitution gives you, affect not to be more than what the Law makes you; separate not yourself and Brethren too much from the Laity; for woe be to you, if ever they should separate themselves from you. If upon Examination you find any Milstones about the Neck of your Cause, any excessive Absurdities, any contradictory Tenets, any terrible Claims, any hurtful or oppressive Practices, any unpopular Principles or Rules, such as square not with the general Interests and Sentiments of the Laity: Begin, O holy Father, to throw off such Milstones into the Sea, lest they pull you thither after them. 'Tis better to quit, with a good Grace, even the most favourite Point or Mistake, than be forced to quit it with Shame and the Imputation of Obstinacy.

What those Milstones, those indefensible Points are, I pretend not farther to explain to one of your Sagacity. Some of them I have named. In your Researches for others, perhaps it may merit some Inquiry, or perhaps very little, whether ecclesiastical Courts be any considerable Support or Credit to the Cause of the Church (for I think Religion has little to do with them). I will venture to say, that Excommunication is a Matter of very serious, of very melancholy Attention to every

every Man who believes in God, and has a regard for the Bodies or Souls of Men. Are there not moreover some Things in the Oath given to Churchwardens, hard, if not impossible to be kept; either obliging them to be perjured themselves, or uneasy and even intolerable to their Neighbours? And are there not certain odd and contradictory Oaths in the Universities, which are a Scandal to Religion, and a Contradiction to Learning, and even to Morality? And does it not become the Zeal of any Christian Pastor, to remove all such Scandals? And would they not be removed, if Religion were as much considered as ecclesiastical Policy and Power?

I would likewise humbly propose, whether a true, a good, or even a christian use has been generally made of the 30th of *January*? whether those of your Order have generally acted upon it like Ambassadors of *Truth* and *Peace*? and whether either the civil Government of King *Charles I.* or the ecclesiastical Government of Archbishop *Laud*, be proper Patterns to be followed in a free and a christian Country? I think that, in my Sermon, I have amply shewn that they are not. Let me add here one remarkable Passage out of *Rusſworth*: “About this time (in “the Year 1636) the new Statutes for the “University of *Oxford*, were finished and “published in Convocation. The Preface “disparaged King *Edward* the VIth’s Times
“and

“ and Government, declaring, the Discipline
 “ of the University was discomposed by that
 “ King’s Injunctions, and that it did revive
 “ and flourish again in *Queen Mary’s Days*
 “ under Cardinal *Pool*; when by the much
 “ to be desired Felicity of those Times, an
 “ inbred Candor supplied the Defect of Sta-
 “ tutes.”

Was there ever in any Declaration, even
 from the *Vatican*, more of the Popish Stile
 and Spirit? The Times and Government of
 that excellent Prince, that pious Protestant
 and Reformer, *Edward the VIth*, are traduced
 by an *English* Convocation, for his having
 unsettled the old Popish Discipline, and re-
 duced it nearer to the Genius of the Refor-
 mation. The Days of that Popish Bigot,
Queen Mary, are wished for; that is, the
 Days when Popery, with all its Power and
 Fury, was restored, the Protestant Religion
 abolished, and Protestants openly and merci-
 lessly burned; a *Romish* Cardinal is mentioned
 and extolled for his Church Government, and
 Popish Superstition, and Bigotry, and blind
 Obedience, are represented as *inbred Candor*.

Say, Holy Father, were the Members of
 this Convocation Protestants, or was *Laud*,
 who governed them, a Protestant? And was
 it any Hardship or Wonder, that he and they
 were represented as Papists? And what was
 that King who submitted to, and assisted
 them in all their violent and popish Pursuits?

nay,

may, was their Advocate against himself; when instead of asserting his Prerogative and Supremacy, and supporting the University of *Cambridge*, who opposed *Laud's* Visitation of them, as what he could not undertake without the King's Commission; he, even the King in Person, argued for this Usurpation, for this Invasion of his Royalty, for this Seizure and Impropriation of his Power and Dignity?

Strange Condescension and Folly in him, as well as Inconsistency of Character! fond of exalting the Prerogative over the Belly of Law and Justice where the Laity were concerned, yet poorly laying it under the Feet of the Clergy, where the Protection of his People, and his own Duty and Honour, called upon him to preserve and exert it. I shall here add a further Catalogue of his Oppressions, as the same are summed up in a lively manner by the late excellent Mr. *Trenchard*, in his *Short History of Standing Armies in England*.

—“ This King's whole Reign was one continued Act against the Laws: He dissolved
 “ his first Parliament for presuming to en-
 “ quire into his Father's Death, though he
 “ lost a great Sum of Money by it, which
 “ they had voted him: He entered at the
 “ same time into a War with *France* and
 “ *Spain*, upon the private Piques of *Bucking-*
 “ *ham*, who managed them to the eternal
 “ Dishonour

“ Dishonour and Reproach of the *English*
 “ Nation; witness the ridiculous Enterpri-
 “ zes upon *Cadiz* and the Isle of *Rhee*: He
 “ delivered *Pennington’s* Fleet into the *French*
 “ Hands, betrayed the poor *Rochellers*, and
 “ suffered the Protestant Interest in *France*
 “ to be quite extirpated: He raised Loans;
 “ Excises, Coat and Conduct-Money, Tun-
 “ nage and Poundage, Knighthood and Ship-
 “ Money, without Authority of Parliament;
 “ imposed new Oaths on the Subjects to dis-
 “ cover the Value of their Estates; imprison-
 “ ed great Numbers of the most considera-
 “ ble Gentry and Merchants for not paying
 “ his arbitrary Taxes; some he sent beyond
 “ Sea, and the poorer sort he press’d for Sol-
 “ diers: He kept Soldiers on free Quarter,
 “ and executed martial Law upon them: He
 “ granted Monopolies without Number, and
 “ broke the Bounds of the Forests: He erect-
 “ ed arbitrary Courts, and enlarged others;
 “ as the High Commission-Court, Star-Cham-
 “ ber, Court of Honour, Court of Requests,
 “ &c. and unspeakable Oppressions were com-
 “ mitted in them, even to Men of the first
 “ Quality. He commanded the Earl of *Bri-*
 “ *stol* and Bishop of *Lincoln* not to come to
 “ Parliament; committed and prosecuted a
 “ great many of the most eminent Members
 “ of the House of Commons for what they
 “ did there, some for no Cause at all; and
 “ would not let them have the Benefit of
 “ *Habeas*

“ *Habeas Corpus*: Suspended and confined
 “ Archbishop *Abbot*, because he would not
 “ license a Sermon that asserted despotick
 “ Power, whatever other Cause was pretend-
 “ ed: He suspended the Bishop of *Glou-*
 “ *cester*. for refusing to swear never to con-
 “ sent to alter the Government of the Church:
 “ Supported all his arbitrary Ministers against
 “ the Parliament, telling them, he *wondered*
 “ *at the foolish Impudence of any one to think*
 “ *he would part with the meanest of his Ser-*
 “ *vants upon their Account*: And indeed in
 “ his Speeches, or rather Menaces, he treat-
 “ ed them like his Footmen, calling them
 “ *undutiful, seditious, and Vipers*: He brought
 “ unheard-of Innovations into the Church,
 “ preferred Men of arbitrary Principles, and
 “ inclinable to Popery, especially those Fire-
 “ brands *Laud, Montague, and Manwaring*;
 “ one of whom had been complained of in
 “ Parliament, another impeached for ad-
 “ vancing Popery, and the third condemn-
 “ ed in the House of Lords: He dispensed
 “ with the Laws against Papists, and both
 “ encouraged and preferred them: He cal-
 “ led no Parliament for twelve Years toge-
 “ ther, and in that time governed as arbi-
 “ trarily as the *Grand Signior*: He abetted
 “ the *Irish* Massacre, as appears by their
 “ producing a Commission under the Great-

“ Seal of *Scotland*; by the Letter of *Charles*
 “ the Second in favour of the Marquis of
 “ *Antrim*; by his stopping the Succours that
 “ the Parliament sent to reduce *Ireland*, six
 “ Months under the Walls of *Chester*; by his
 “ entering into a Treaty with the Rebels,
 “ after he had engaged his Faith to the Par-
 “ liament to the contrary; and bringing over
 “ many Thousands of them to fight against
 “ his People.——

“ Upon pretence of the *Spanish* and *French*
 “ War, he raised many thousand Men, who
 “ lived upon free Quarter, and robbed and
 “ destroyed where-ever they came: But be-
 “ ing unsuccessful in his Wars abroad, and
 “ pressed by the Clamours of the People at
 “ home, he was forced to disband them.
 “ In 1627 he sent over 30000 *l.* to *Holland*,
 “ to raise 3000 *German* Horse to force his
 “ arbitrary Taxes; but this Matter taking
 “ Wind, and being examined by the Parlia-
 “ ment, Orders were sent to countermand
 “ them. In the 15th Year of his Reign, he
 “ gave a Commission to *Strafford* to raise
 “ 8000 *Irish* to be brought into *England*:
 “ But before they could get hither, the *Scots*
 “ were in Arms for the like Oppressions,
 “ and marched into *Northumberland*; which
 “ forcing him to call a Parliament, prevent-
 “ ed that Design, and so that Army was
 “ dis-

“ disbanded. Soon after he raised an Army
 “ in *England* to oppose the *Scots*, and tam-
 “ pered with them to march to *London*, and
 “ dissolve the Parliament: But this Army
 “ being composed, for the most part, of the
 “ Militia, and the Matter being communica-
 “ ted to the House, who immediately fell on
 “ the Officers that were Members, as *Ash-*
 “ *burnham, Wilmot, Pollard, &c.* the Design
 “ came to nothing.”

I could quote much more from the same Pamphlet; but, to use the Words of the Author, *it is endless to enumerate all the Oppressions of his Reign.* What think you, holy Father, of the Panegyricks made upon such a Prince for almost a Century past by the Clergy, or of the Clergy who made and make those Panegyricks either upon him or *Laud*?

I think nothing is more manifest, than that in those Days there was a settled Purpose, both in the Court and in the Churchmen, to overturn the Reformation and the Constitution; nay, each of these Designs was well nigh accomplished; and it was already the Fashion, not only to treat such who adhered to the Law against the Violence and mad Maxims which then prevailed, as Traitors; but the Name of *Traitors* and *Rebels* were, by *Laud's* Followers and Creatures, bestowed upon our first pious Reformers; and with

the Reformation itself great Faults were found, especially with those Parts of it which retrenched the Wealth and Power of the Clergy: Popish Ceremonies were daily restored, with the Bowings, Grimaces, Pictures, and Forms usually seen at Popish Chappels and Masses; and all Men were persecuted, many ruined, who opposed such scandalous Innovations, tending only to advance Superstition and Priestcraft.

Why many of these Innovations, and such Defection from the Reformation still continue, I leave you, holy Father, to consider and explain. I desire this of you the rather, for that I am told, that you often hold up your Hands, and wonder how Clergymen can by their Writings contradict what they have once subscribed.

That you should wonder at this, is indeed matter of Wonder. Is there one of you that conforms to the genuine Sense, or even to the Words of the Articles? Are not these Articles *Calvinistical*? Were they not composed by *Calvinists*? And are you not now, and have been long, all *Arminians*? And do you not preach and write against the *Presbyterians* who defend *Predestination*, which is one of your own *Articles*?

Will you say that Articles, will you say that Oaths, are to be taken in a Sense different

rent from the Words, different from the Meaning of those who compose them? If you do, then you maintain that *Papists*, nay, that *Mahometans* may subscribe our Protestant Articles, and be still *Mahometans* and *Papists*; and that *Jacobites* may take the State Oaths, and be still *Jacobites*.

What Subscriptions or Declarations, or indeed what other Ties can bind Men, who, after they have solemnly testified that they are called by the *Holy Ghost*, yet subscribe the direct contrary to what they believe, subscribe the Doctrines of *Calvin*, yet remain Antagonists to *Calvin*? Is this Practice, this solemn Assertion of a Falshood, for the Honour of Religion, or of Churchmen? Or, is it not the direct Method to harden Men against Truth and Conscience, and to turn holy Things into Contempt? Yet you still go on to subscribe those Articles, still to disbelieve and contradict them, yet never attempt to alter or abolish them. Does such contradictory Doings shew any Regard for Religion, or for Truth or Decency?

After such Departure from the doctrinal Articles, you cannot with any Decency blame such who differ from your Notions about Church Power and Discipline. The Church and Constitution of *England* neither owns nor knows any Clergymen but such who de-

rive all their Power from the Law : All others are Pretenders, or rather Deserters, and would be Usurpers, if the Laity and the Law would let them. Such Clergymen therefore as disclaim all Power, and Pomp, and Revenue whatsoever, but what the Law and Laymen give them, are the only Clergy that Laymen ought to reverence or indeed acknowledge : All the rest, who assert a prior Right, and have superior Demands, should be considered as lurking Enemies or bold Invaders, and carefully watched and resisted. Nor is it small want of Modesty in you, and such as are like you, to censure such Clergymen as adhere to the Law and Constitution, whilst you assume to yourselves a Latitude to dissent from your very Articles, with spiritual Characters and Powers, superior to the Law, and independent upon it.

Can any Layman, who has common Sense, or common Notions of Truth and Liberty, bear with Patience a Spirit so arrogant, with such a saucy and inconsistent Behaviour ? Far different, and indeed quite opposite was the Spirit of the Reformation. Nor is Reverence due to any Clergyman in whom this last Spirit is not found. Neither are they at all Clergymen of the Church of *England*, in whom the contrary Spirit is found. Can any Layman be at a Moment's loss to know, what
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sort of Clergymen are most useful and amiable to him; they who set up to command him, and consequently to put Chains upon him; or they who claim only the Liberty to instruct and advise him, and therefore leave him still as free as he was before?

Be pleased also, holy Father, to instruct me in the Nature and Efficacy of *Absolution*. Is it authoritative, and proceeding from the Power of the Priest only? or is it conditional, and only a Declaration that God will accept, or hath accepted sincere Repentance? If God pardons upon Repentance, what Force is in Absolution, or what Use, further than to ease poor Sinners, by assuring them, that if they have repented, God has forgiven them? If this be all, any Man, even the Sinner himself, may pronounce such a Declaration upon himself. Or does God stay to forgive, even after Repentance, till the Priest pronounces Absolution? If so, has not the Priest a greater Share than God in saving Men; nay, a superior Power, if his part comes first, and his Absolution takes place of, and introduces God's Pardon? If Repentance suffices without a Priest or Absolution, then what signifies either upon such Occasion, further than for a Declaration of Comfort? And without Repentance, what avails Absolution? Will you say that it avails?

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Or has our blessed Saviour ever said so? You must needs know what extravagant Positions, and what impious Claims of Power, have been confidently derived from this Privilege of Priests to pronounce Absolution, as if it inferred a Power to damn and save; though it be really no more than what any Man may pronounce to another, or to himself, or to many, if they desire it, or will hear it. Has not this therefore, as well as many other pious Practices, been horribly abused and perverted by the ungodly Craft of selfish Priests?

Whilst I am giving you all this Trouble, and tiring you with so many Questions, permit me, holy Father, to mix a little Comfort with so much Freedom and Importunity. I am told that your Ease and Rest are greatly interrupted and broken by the Increase and Prevalence of *Free-thinking*. Be not too much frightened; the Mob and the Many will always be orthodox, always true to the Church, to Holy-Days, and pious Rioting, for Reasons too apparent to need mention. The Number of Free-thinkers, that is, of Men who bring all Things to the Bar and Trial of right Reason, can never be so very great as justly to alarm the Clergy, can never greatly diminish the Majority of a Country, who will always be of
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the Church in vogue, always have Religion, if not that of Reason and Nature, yet surely that of Authority and of the Priesthood, who are themselves always conformable to Establishments and Tithes, and the prevailing Faith.

I doubt it will not be equally pleasing to you, to be told, at least to have the Publick told; that it is by no means *Free-thinking* which fills the Goals, or loads the Gallows, or even peoples *Exchange-Alley*, or increases publick or private Knavery, or contributes at all towards it. Was the *South-Sea* Scheme the Effect of *Free-thinking*? Sir *John Blunt* was a great Saint and Frequenter of the Ordinances; nor were any of his Confederates suspected of Deism. Was it *Free-thinking* that contrived or promoted national Massacres, that of *Ireland* or of *Paris*? Has it produced or assisted the Inquisition or Persecution? Was the Monk *St. Dominic* a *Free-thinker*, or was Bishop *Laud* one? Has *Free-thinking* encouraged, or have *Free-thinkers* perpetrated particular Murders or Assassinations? Was *Ravillac* a *Free-thinker*, or was he who murdered the *Prince of Orange*? Or was he one, who offered to murder the late King? Are the Banditti and Assassins in *Italy* *Free-thinkers*? Are

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not these Villains good Catholicks, and Frequenters of Churches? Do any of our own Thieves die Free-thinkers? Do they not generally die good Churchmen, Catholic or Protestant, and always of some Religion? Was the famous Murtheress *Sarah Malcolm* a Free-thinker? Did she die one, or declare that she had lived one?

No; holy Father! *Free-thinking* has no Profelytes in *Newgate* or *Exchange-Alley*. I doubt it will be found that it is not Free-thinking that steals in Shops, or cheats behind Counters, or robs Houses, or cuts Throats. Nor is it Free-thinking that *absolves* Criminals of any sort, much less *Traitors* and *Assassins*; nor consequently encourages such Crimes. I could, had I time, enlarge with Success on this Subject, and convince all Men, that Free-thinking disclaims all Alliance with Vice and Mobs, and dissolute Men; and leaves all Knaves, Profligates, and Hypocrites, to *Conformity* and *Creeds*, and the numerous Train of *Orthodoxy*.

It seems you have likewise found great Evils occasioned by People's not coming to Church. My own Opinion is, that when People find themselves edified by going, they will go: when they are not edified, their going avails not. If the People

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ple had the Choice of their own Ministers, as in the primitive Times they had, 'tis more than probable they would go oftner. But when they neither like the Man nor the Matter, 'tis not likely that they will hear either. I was therefore surprized to hear that some of your *Scouts* and humble Agents, (employed, I suppose, to try the Pulse of the Publick) have mentioned *compulsory Laws*, still in force, to oblige People to go to Church. Pray, can you reconcile such a Law, if there be one, to the Principles and Laws of Toleration? Could any such Law be at first procured but by the Sollicitations of the persecuting Clergy? Or could any but Persecutors solicit such a Law? Is it just or christian, to force any Man to hear what or whom he likes not? Would a High-churchman care to be forced to hear a Presbyterian Preacher, suppose in a Country where there were no other, as in *Geneva*? And should he not do as he would be done by? No penal Laws whatsoever were, or ever could be, prompted by a Christian Spirit. And besides this Consideration, I wonder how any Man can contend for the Continuance of Tests and Penalties here in *England*, as you do, and yet be against the Exercise of such in

Scotland. Is this equal Justice, or equal Charity?

I should be quite too tedious to my Readers and myself (to you, holy Father, I fear I have been so already) should I but touch every Topick that deserves your Animadversion and that of the Publick. I cannot forbear mentioning one Practice very common amongst you *Churchmen*, though it be destitute of all Candor, of all Truth and Charity. Whenever any clerical Folly, or Artifice, or Usurpation, or false Position, is attacked, he who does so, scarce ever fails of being accused, of having attacked whatever is *serious* and *sacred*; and he is confidently charged with Irreligion, though he has evidently espoused and defended Religion against such as had profaned it, and blended it with Superstition and Power.

This Method of yours may have some Effect upon the Vulgar; but with Men of Sense, it hurts you, by discovering what you mean by *Things serious and sacred*. If by these Words you understood only the *Gospel*, and *Conscience*, and the *Duties* enjoined by either, you could have taken no Offence at any Writings which commend and vindicate Christianity, and only expose what weakens and defaces it,
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even the Pride, and Violence of domineering and superstitious Priests. That there are such Priests, I presume you will not deny; nor that such Priests act not in all Things, or indeed hardly in any, upon the Foot and Motives of the Gospel.

That my late Sermon is entirely upon the Christian Scheme, and in the Christian Stile, I aver, and every Man may perceive; and therefore no Man, who regards Christianity and civil Liberty, can possibly dislike it. What it attacks is clerical Wantonness, clerical Superstition and Fury, Tyranny and Usurpation, both in the State and in the Church. If therefore that Sermon provoke you, it is manifest what pleases you, what you approve, and what you pursue. For myself I can say truly, and therefore boldly, that my Writings are entirely conformable to the Religion and Laws of my Country: Nor can any impartial Judge affirm of that Sermon, or of any Performance of mine (if there be any more of mine, besides that and this) what I have often heard the ablest Lawyers in this Nation affirm of a bulky Performance of yours, *That it is a Libel upon the Laws and Constitution of England, and ought to be burned by the Hand of the Common Hangman.*

Here

Here I humbly bend my Knee, holy
Father, and kissing your Vestment, sub-
scribe myself with profound Adoration,

Your Great Admirer,

And Dutiful Son;

Lincoln's-Inn,
March 8. 1732-3.

A LAYMAN.



